

## **Response from the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman to the Patients Association's consultation on their draft five-year strategy**

10 September 2020

### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 The Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman (PHSO) was set up by Parliament to provide an independent complaint handling service. It makes final decisions on complaints that have not been resolved by the NHS in England and UK Government departments and other public organisations. It looks into complaints where someone believes there has been injustice or hardship because an organisation has not acted properly or has given a poor service and not put things right.
- 1.2 PHSO welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the Patients Association's survey to support the development of their new five-year strategy.

### **2. What do you think of the Patients Association proposed purpose and scenario plan?**

- 2.1 PHSO welcomes that the draft strategy promotes a learning and improvement culture, including seeking feedback. The strategy aligns with the key principles of the draft NHS Complaints Standards Framework (CSF) which emphasise viewing complaints as an opportunity to drive improvement, as well as welcoming and being open to learn from feedback. These have been developed in close partnership with advocacy groups and national bodies. Our 2016 report [\*Learning from Mistakes\*](#) also focused on building a culture of learning in the NHS and informed our approach.
- 2.2 PHSO also welcomes the emphasis on learning from the response to the pandemic; and agrees that it is important to refer to the uncertainty of the impact of COVID-19 on services. The Ombudsman has already called publicly for an independent lessons-learned review to the response to COVID-19 and is keen to hear how the Government plans to progress this further.
- 2.3 PHSO supports the ambition in the new strategy for co-production and partnership with patients. Meaningful collaboration with patients is critical

to ensure that services are designed to be effective in meeting patients' needs. PHSO has applied this approach in the recent draft NHS Complaints Standard Framework and will continue to do so in future work. We would welcome the opportunity to work with the Patients Association in this way on any projects where this may be appropriate.

**3. Do you like the Patients Association's strategy? Is there any specific feedback you would like to give?**

3.1 We look forward to seeing the detailed plans that set out how the Patients Association will develop the strategy.

3.2 We would be particularly interested to understand the role complaints will play in the Patients Association's work to use co-production with patients to drive learning and improvement. We would also welcome the opportunity to discuss areas where it may be appropriate for PHSO to be involved in this work, particularly where it could help ensure people that need to access our service know how to do this. This would align with the ambitions we have set out in our own [draft strategy](#).

**4. What help do you need to work in partnership with patients?**

4.1 PHSO appreciates the support of the Patients Association in improving access to justice by helping to raise awareness of PHSO's complaint handling service.

4.2 PHSO has also welcomed the involvement of advocacy groups including the Patients Association in the development of the draft NHS Complaints Standards Framework, which has ensured that the voice of patients is heard and represented in the Framework.

4.3 As we have developed our sector-innovative [service charter](#), we have already begun to incorporate more qualitative research, from focus groups to in-depth interviews, to broaden the feedback we receive. We would welcome the opportunity to continue working with the Patients Association so the feedback it receives about our service can also feed into our approach to continuous learning and improvement.

**5. How do you think our strategic aims will affect the way that you work with the Patients Association in the future?**

5.1 PHSO welcomes the opportunity to continue working with the Patients Association at both a strategic and working level to share learning and insight from PHSO's casework and the Patients Association's engagement with its members and other patients, families, and carers.

5.2 We are pleased to work with the Patients Association in our Complaint Standards Framework working group meetings. We welcome their continued engagement and support as we work towards the launch of the

Complaints Standard Framework across the NHS as well as in the other potential areas of joint working highlighted across this response.